



The Hidden Costs of Non-Adherence

spencer
health solutions



Introduction

Medication adherence is a critical issue in healthcare that often goes unnoticed. While the immediate consequences of missing a dose might seem minor, the cumulative impact of non-adherence can be staggering. It not only affects patient health but also places a significant financial burden on the healthcare system and pharmaceutical companies. In this blog, we will explore the hidden costs of non-adherence, why it occurs, and how innovative solutions like spencer[®], the smart medication dispenser, can play a vital role in addressing this challenge.



The Scope of the Problem

Medication non-adherence refers to patients not taking their medications as prescribed by their healthcare providers. This can include not filling prescriptions, missing doses, taking incorrect dosages, or discontinuing medication prematurely. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that approximately 50% of patients with chronic diseases do not take their medications as prescribed.¹

The financial ramifications of medication non-adherence are substantial. According to a report by the New England Healthcare Institute, non-adherence leads to an estimated \$290 billion in increased healthcare costs annually in the U.S.² These costs arise from increased hospitalizations, additional doctor visits, and the need for more intensive treatments when conditions worsen.

For pharmaceutical companies, non-adherence translates to lost revenue and decreased effectiveness of their treatments. The estimated loss in revenue due to medication non-adherence is about \$637 billion globally.³ This significant financial loss underscores the need for effective patient support programs to ensure medications are taken as prescribed.

Why Non-Adherence Happens

Complex Medication Regimens

One of the primary reasons for non-adherence is the complexity of medication regimens. Patients with chronic conditions often must manage multiple medications with different dosing schedules, making it challenging to keep track of everything. This complexity can lead to confusion and missed doses.

Side Effects

Side effects from medications can be another barrier to adherence. Patients who experience adverse effects may choose to skip doses or discontinue their medication altogether. Effective communication between healthcare providers and patients about potential side effects and how to manage them is crucial.

Lack of Understanding

Patients may not fully understand the importance of their medication or the consequences of not taking it as prescribed. This lack of understanding can stem from insufficient patient education or poor communication from healthcare providers.

Psychological Barriers

Mental health issues such as depression and anxiety can also contribute to non-adherence. Patients dealing with these conditions may lack the motivation to consistently take their medications. Addressing mental health as part of overall patient care can help improve adherence.





The Hidden Costs

Non-adherence can lead to severe health complications, especially for patients with chronic conditions like diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. When patients do not take their medications as prescribed, their conditions can worsen, leading to more frequent hospitalizations and emergency room visits.

Consider the case of Mary, a 60-year-old patient with hypertension. Mary often forgets to take her antihypertensive medications, resulting in poorly controlled blood pressure. As a result, she frequently experiences hypertensive crises, which necessitate multiple emergency room visits. Over time, Mary's uncontrolled hypertension has led to complications such as heart disease and kidney damage, significantly impacting her quality of life and increasing healthcare costs.

Non-adherence is a major driver of hospital readmissions. Studies have shown that patients who do not adhere to their medication regimens are more likely to be readmitted within 30 days of discharge.⁴ This not only affects patient outcomes but also places a financial strain on hospitals and insurance providers.

The economic burden of non-adherence extends beyond direct medical costs. It includes indirect costs such as lost productivity, disability, and the need for long-term care. For instance, a study published in *The Journal of occupational and environmental medicine* found that proper medication adherence was associated with, “between 1.7 and 7.1 fewer days absent from work and between 1.1 and 5.0 fewer days on short-term disability.”⁵

Non-adherence can also stifle pharmaceutical innovation. When patients do not take their medications as prescribed, it becomes difficult to assess the true effectiveness of new treatments. This can lead to misleading results in clinical trials and hinder the development of new therapies.

Addressing Non-Adherence: The Role of Technology

To combat the issue of non-adherence, innovative solutions like spencer®, the smart medication dispenser, have been developed. spencer is designed to simplify medication management and ensure that patients take their medications as prescribed.

Features of spencer

Automated Dispensing: spencer automatically dispenses the correct medication at the right time, reducing the risk of missed doses.

Reminders and Alerts: spencer sends reminders and alerts to patients and caregivers, helping to ensure that medications are taken on schedule.

Data Tracking: spencer tracks medication adherence and provides real-time data to healthcare providers, allowing for timely interventions if issues arise.

Patient Support: spencer offers support and information to patients, helping them understand the importance of each medication they are taking and how to manage them effectively.

ePRO Collection: spencer displays custom post-dose surveys to give healthcare providers and patient support program directors a better understanding of their patient's well-being while on their medications.



Benefits of Increased Adherence for Pharmaceutical Companies

By improving medication adherence, pharmaceutical companies can enhance patient outcomes and demonstrate the effectiveness of their treatments. This can lead to increased patient satisfaction and loyalty.

Smart medication dispensers like spencer provide valuable data on patient adherence. This data can be used to gain insights into patient behavior, identify trends, identify if a patient is at risk of becoming non-adherent, and develop more effective patient support programs.

Pharmaceutical companies that invest in patient support technologies can gain a competitive advantage in the market. By demonstrating a commitment to patient care and outcomes, they can differentiate themselves from competitors, build stronger relationships with healthcare providers and patients, and achieve significant ROI on their investment.



Conclusion

Medication non-adherence is a complex and costly issue that affects patients, healthcare systems, and pharmaceutical companies. The hidden costs of non-adherence are substantial, ranging from increased hospitalizations and healthcare costs to lost revenue and stifled innovation. However, innovative solutions like spencer® offer a promising way to address this challenge.

By simplifying medication management, providing real-time data, and offering personalized support, spencer can significantly improve medication adherence. This not only enhances patient outcomes but also provides valuable benefits to pharmaceutical companies, including improved data collection, reduced costs, and a competitive advantage.

Investing in smart medication dispensers like spencer is a proactive step towards addressing the hidden costs of non-adherence and ensuring better health outcomes for patients. As the healthcare industry continues to evolve, embracing technology and innovation will be key to overcoming the challenges of medication non-adherence and improving the overall quality of care.

For more information on how Spencer Health Solutions can support your patient programs visit our website at: <https://spencerhealthsolutions.com/book-a-demo/>





References:

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FAQs

What are the main causes of medication non-adherence?

Medication non-adherence can be caused by several factors including complex medication regimens, side effects, lack of understanding about the medication, and psychological barriers such as depression or anxiety. Addressing these issues through patient education and support programs can significantly improve adherence.

What health complications can arise from medication non-adherence?

Medication non-adherence can lead to severe health complications, particularly for patients with chronic conditions such as hypertension, heart disease, and asthma. Poor adherence can result in poorly controlled symptoms, increased hospitalizations, and the progression of the disease, ultimately worsening patient outcomes.

How does non-adherence affect hospital readmission rates?

Non-adherence to medication is a significant factor in hospital readmissions. Patients who do not follow their prescribed medication regimens are more likely to be readmitted within 30 days of discharge, which increases healthcare costs and negatively impacts patient health outcomes.

How can spencer support patient adherence?

spencer supports patient adherence by automating medication dispensing, sending reminders, and providing real-time adherence data to healthcare providers. This technology simplifies medication management for patients and helps ensure they take their medications as prescribed, leading to better health outcomes.